

indulging in such sweeping generalisations as he has done.—I am, etc.,

Fenge, Sept. 28th.

A. S. DUNCAN.

SIR,—I have read in the BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL of September 26th a letter by Mr. Christopher Heath upon the subject of professional testimonials. In it he quotes an extract from the *Adelaide Express and Telegraph*, in which my name occurs, and appended to it is a distinction to which I have never aspired. Far from being President of the British Laryngological Society I am not even a member, although I did have the honour of being a Vice-President of the London Laryngological Society. I should also add that to the best of my belief I did not give Dr. Ramsay Smith a testimonial intended to be used for the Australian appointment he now holds, although I have once at least borne testimony to his professional abilities. I need hardly say that I am extremely sorry that such use has been made of what was certainly not intended to appear in the lay press.

With regard to the introduction of my own and other names into his letter, I consider that Mr. Heath has not acted with that tact and taste which I should have expected from him. I give a testimonial when it is in my opinion deserved, and feel sure that the same principle guides others in that Edinburgh school at which Mr. Heath aims such a strangely irrelevant sneer. Indeed, I fail to see any point in his letter, as I am certain that Mr. Christopher Heath must be too well aware of the courtesy due by one gentleman to another to wish to suggest that Edinburgh teachers give testimonials which they do not believe to be accurate.—I am, etc.,

Edinburgh, Sept. 28th.

P. McBRIDE.

UNQUALIFIED PRACTICE IN MEDICINE AND IN LAW.

SIR,—With your permission I would earnestly draw the attention of the medical profession in general, and through them and their united efforts to the General Medical Council in particular, to the comparative differences existing between the statutory provisions with regard to the unqualified practitioners in the medical and legal professions respectively. I do not propose to encroach so much upon your valuable space as to quote the penal clauses of the Medical Act and the Solicitors' Act respectively side by side; sufficient to say that the perusal of them must strike the most casual observer with the fact of the more ample provision made against unqualified persons in the practice of the law, compared with those against unqualified practitioners in medicine, whereas no layman even will gainsay the fact that the public weal itself demands that the more ample provision should be on the side of medicine. One can easily imagine that an unqualified lawyer cannot practically do much harm; the very nature of legal work sooner or later brings him in contact with officials who are legally compelled "to know him not"—the taxing master, the terror even of qualified men—would soon make short work of his "bill of costs." As a matter of fact the statute is mostly employed to clip the wings of too venturesome debt collectors, who write "threatening or lawyers' letters," and who do the collecting of debts, etc., perhaps more efficiently than the lawyers themselves. One cannot say, therefore, that this slight poaching on the preserves of the lawyers is a very heinous offence; nevertheless, heavy penalties are held over their heads. On the other hand unqualified medical practitioners may and do do by acts of commission or omission irreparable mischief, and as the law stands—and to all appearances the General Medical Council are quite satisfied—they have a very free hand to do pretty much as they like.

The question naturally arises why this stringent protection of the lawyers with the questionable benefits accruing to the general public thereupon against the legal pretender, and the lax and absolutely inefficient protection of the medical profession and the general public against the medical empiric? The answer is obvious: Parliament, like Heaven, helps them that help themselves.

It may be remarked that the Council of the Incorporated Law Society—the representative body of solicitors is composed entirely of themselves: the general practitioners of the law—and they have taken good care that statutory provisions are

sufficiently strong to meet the slightest attempt by anyone to pose as a member of their profession.

In the General Medical Council the professed general practitioners are very poorly represented. Can this be suggested as the explanation of the unenviable position of the medical profession with regard to the quack?

In comparing the differences between the two enactments before mentioned, the Medical Act and the Solicitors' Act, it is to be noticed that in the former active or positive pretence and absolute fraud—"wilfully and falsely"—of which on legal evidence there is nothing more difficult to establish has to be proved, whereas under the latter Act mere passive or negative pretence is quite sufficient to bring about a conviction.

Slight verbal but important alteration of the present enactment would bring about almost all that the medical profession desire. "Wilfully and falsely" should be struck out and a few other descriptions of the practitioner, etc., should be added somewhat on the following terms: "Any person who takes the name or title of a Physician, Doctor of Medicine, Fellow, Member, or Licentiate in Medicine, Surgery, or Midwifery, Bachelor of Medicine, Surgeon, general practitioner of medicine, surgery, or midwifery, or of a specialist of any branch thereof, such as oculist, aurist, or otherwise, or as an apothecary, or any name, title, or addition, etc.," whereby any person or persons is or may be misled or deceived, should be liable to the usual penalty. But beyond this a new Act should go further; it should provide for an injunction against anyone so convicted, and it should also have provisions declaring that any unqualified person keeping a house or place described, the house or otherwise, as in the public press, as a surgery, hospital, infirmary, dispensary, or otherwise, whereby any person or persons is or may be deceived or misled, should also be liable to penalties and injunction.

No one can blame the General Medical Council with regard to their "resolutions" as to the internal economy of the profession; but beyond endeavouring to raise the standard of right and justice within the profession, some substantial evidence of their endeavour in outside action, not only for the honour of the profession, which they are supposed to represent, but for the benefit and protection of the general public, is one of the crying necessities of the present era of medicine.

—I am, etc.,

Leeds, Sept. 28th.

J. H. WIGHAM.

PROPOSED INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF LEPROLOGISTS.

SIR,—Dr. Goldschmidt, late of Madeira, now at Paris, in a letter to me last December, proposed that a congress of leprologists should be held for the suppression and prevention of leprosy. In a letter I wrote to Dr. Armaner Hansen, I referred to this proposition, and suggested the formation of an international committee—one delegate from each Government—to be permanently active, to meet once a year, and to take cognisance of all questions and problems relating to leprosy, all over the world. I also suggested the collection of a fund, in every country, for the use of this committee, to support asylums, where such help is wanted, and to send specialists, wherever they are needed. Dr. Hansen at once received these overtures with favour, and submitted them to his chief, who, in turn, communicated them to the Norwegian Government. In his answer to me Dr. Hansen said that it was the desire of the Norwegian physicians that the seat of the first leprosy congress should be Bergen, Norway, and that the Norwegian Government was willing to issue the call for the first leprosy congress, provided it had assurances of sympathy from other Governments. I at once applied to President Cleveland, to Her British Majesty, to the Emperor of Germany, to President Diaz of Mexico, to Lord Aberdeen of Canada, to the Japanese and Chinese Governments, and to all the republics of South America. I also submitted this scheme to the American Dermatological Association, to the American Public Health Associations (of Canada, the United States, and Mexico), and to Miss Clara Barton, the President of the American Red Cross Society. It is to be communicated also to the Pope, through Archbishop Corrigan. It is desired that every influence that may exist, of any kind, be brought to bear upon the different Governments, so that they may consent to appoint official delegates. Of course, leprologists